

The 2002 IHS STRATEGIC PLAN:

Improving the Health of American Indian and Alaska Native People Through Collaboration and Innovation

MISSION:

The mission of the Indian Health Service, in partnership with American Indian and Alaska Native people, is to raise their physical, mental, social, and spiritual health to the highest level.

GOAL:

To assure that comprehensive, culturally acceptable personal and public health services are available and accessible to American Indian and Alaska Native people.

FOUNDATION:

To uphold the Federal Government's obligation to promote healthy American Indian and Alaska Native people, communities, and cultures and to honor and protect the inherent sovereign rights of Tribes.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

While the IHS has the primary Federal responsibility for health care for American Indians and Alaska Natives, it does not have the capacity and resources to address the health care needs of Indian people by itself. This can only be accomplished through the larger Indian health network, comprised of IHS, tribes, tribal organizations, urban Indian programs and organizations, other Federal agencies, State agencies, city and county governments, colleges and universities, private organizations, and others who share a responsibility or interest in Indian health. Many of IHS's relationships and roles are based upon tribal sovereignty and a government to government relationship with tribes.

Clearly the IHS cannot presume to prescribe responsibilities for the Indian

health network. However, the IHS can specifically define its own roles, responsibilities, and strategies within the network as well as assume its role as a partner and collaborator in improving the health of American Indians and Alaska Natives. IHS can also recommend strategies and activities for the Indian health network to consider in support of the IHS Mission, Goal, and Foundation.

The workgroup believes that the long-term success of the IHS is dependent on effective collaboration and synergism between the IHS and its diverse stakeholders. The Mission, Goal and Foundation of the Indian Health Service are not achievable without this collaboration.

Process

To facilitate this goal, a diverse group of IHS stakeholders were charged by IHS leadership to develop a strategic plan. This strategic plan is designed to propose appropriate strategies and activities that can facilitate the IHS Mission, Goal, and Foundation during the current decade. The strategic planning process began with a comprehensive assessment of the strengths, weaknesses, threats, opportunities, health trends, funding issues, and statutory and regulatory issues within the current Indian health network environment.

Planning Assumptions

The Plan was developed in response to five critical planning assumptions identified by the workgroup's analysis:

1. The health status of AI/AN people is decreasing while health care costs are increasing.

While the disease burden increases in AI/AN communities, the cost of providing appropriate quality health services has also increased. Reversing the health status disparity of AI/AN people requires assuring access to proven clinical treatment of diseases and conditions as well as effective primary interventions to prevent their occurrence. Implementing new technologies and identifying alternative resources are essential for this to occur.

2. Future increases in appropriated funding for the IHS are uncertain.

While greater I/T/U collaboration and joint decision making have contributed to recent increases in IHS appropriations, it is doubtful that these increases can be assured given the current political and economic climate. Increasing efficiency, expanding collections, and developing alternative resource channels are essential to improve AI/AN health.

3. The proportion of resources under the control of the IHS will decrease.

The IHS must effectively coordinate with an expanded Indian health network to bring new knowledge, technology, and funding to the Indian health system. Continued downsizing of IHS Area and Headquarters offices mandates the identification of cost-effective ways to maintain and strengthen essential capacity to effectively advocate for the health needs of AI/AN people.

4. Assuring organizational capacity and expertise remains a mission-critical challenge for the Indian health system.

IHS must assure that the organizational capacity and expertise exist to meet the human resource needs. This is dependent on being able to hire competent, well-trained staff and to support the development and retention of current staff through orientation, job experience, mentoring, and long and short-term training experiences.

5. Data and Information Technology needs are increasing.

The capacity to collect, compile, and report health status, workload, and financial data that is credible is essential for assessing health status and effectively managing programs. In addition, accountability requirements and advocacy are dependent upon an improved data system. Identifying and implementing effective and efficient information technology approaches that can meet these needs must remain an agency priority.

Strategic Goals

The need to develop a more proactive and broad-based Indian health network is self-evident. The following Strategic Goals and Objectives are intended to provide the IHS leaderships and the soon to be developed

second Indian Health Design Team a road map to measure improvements in the health and quality of life of the AI/AN people.

STRATEGIC GOAL 1: Build Healthy Communities

Health care is partially determined at the community level; lifestyles established at that level profoundly influence health. The application of collaborative public health models remains critical to the development of these healthy communities. These public health models can help empower communities to identify their own health problems as well as actively involve them in developing the solutions.

Objective 1.1 - Mobilize AI/AN communities to promote wellness and healing.

Objective 1.2 - Develop and support community and public health infrastructure.

Objective 1.3 - Ensure access to information and technical expertise to define and characterize the community, identify the community health problems, and monitor the effectiveness of community interventions.

STRATEGIC GOAL 2: Achieve Parity in Access by 2010

Achieving parity in access to essential health care services must remain a priority. This requires a more focused advocacy effort coordinated across an expanded Indian health network. It also requires improving efficiencies, increasing collections, and tapping alternative revenue streams across I/T/Us. It requires appropriate organizational capacity and expertise within the Indian Health System.

Objective 2.1 - Effectively advocate for the health of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Objective 2.2 - Support the delivery of comprehensive and quality Indian health care by maximizing all sources of funding and resources.

Objective 2.3 - Expand and maintain organizational capacity and expertise.

STRATEGIC GOAL 3: Provide Compassionate, Quality Health Care

Improving the quality, safety, effectiveness, and acceptability of comprehensive health care for AI/ANs remains a management priority. Comprehensive strategies that enhance cultural sensitivity within the provider system as well as policies and IT supported infrastructure to diffuse safe, evidence-based standards of care and health information to providers and consumers.

Objective 3.1 - Provide comprehensive and effective health care services.

Objective 3.2 - Improve the safety and quality of health care.

Objective 3.3 - Provide quality health information for decision making to patients, providers and communities through improved information systems.

STRATEGIC GOAL 4: Embrace Innovation

The IHS can only achieve the previous three goals by embracing innovation. The IHS must develop a more a proactive and entrepreneurial corporate culture, and expand partnerships and coalitions to expand the Indian health network. This requires the IHS to improve its coordination and communications capacity and support the development of new structures which can assist the Indian health network advocacy efforts in multiple dimensions.

Objective 4.1 - Expand coalitions and partnerships to build a dynamic Indian health network.

Objective 4.2 - Become a network of innovative, creative, problem-solving organizations.

Objective 4.3 - Improve two-way communications with patients, employees, and the network.

Objective 4.4 - Develop an alternative organizational structure to support Indian health innovation and advocacy.

